

1 1. In a network system including at least two network devices network
2 connectable so as to be capable of engaging in an instant messaging session, a method for
3 users of the at least two network devices to communicate via instant messaging, the
4 method reducing the amount of input required by the users, the method comprising:

5 a first network device receiving a first instant message;
6 automatically, and without user intervention, extracting one or more language
7 expressions associated with the first instant message;
8 displaying one or more language expressions associated with the first instant
9 message at the first network device;
10 receiving a user selection of one or more of the language expressions displayed at
11 the first network device; and
12 including the selected language expressions in a reply instant message to the first
13 instant message.

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15 2. The method as recited in claim 1, wherein a first network device receiving a
16 first instant message comprises the following:

17 a television set top box receiving a first instant message.

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19 3. The method as recited in claim 2, wherein the a television set top box
20 receiving a first instant message comprises the following:

21 a television set top box associated with a cable television network receiving a first
22 instant message.
23

1 4. The method as recited in claim 1, wherein extracting one or more language
2 expressions associated with the first instant message comprises the following:

3 extracting one or more language expressions from the contents of the first instant
4 message.

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6 5. The method as recited in claim 1, wherein extracting one or more language
7 expressions associated with the first instant message comprises the following:

8 extracting one or more language expressions from closed caption data.

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10 6. The method as recited in claim 1, wherein extracting one or more language
11 expressions associated with the first instant message comprises the following:

12 extracting one or more language expressions from text manually entered by the
13 user.

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15 7. The method as recited in claim 1, wherein extracting one or more language
16 expressions associated with the first instant message comprises the following:

17 extracting one or more language expressions from a data dictionary.

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19 8. The method as recited in claim 7, wherein extracting one or more language
20 expressions from a data dictionary comprises the following:

21 extracting one or more language expressions from a data dictionary that includes
22 language expressions from previously received instant messages.

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displaying television programming on the video display.

1 14. The method as recited in claim 13, wherein one or more language
2 expressions associated with the first instant message and television programming are
3 displayed on the video display simultaneously.
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5 15. The method as recited in claim 1, wherein displaying one or more language
6 expressions associated with the first instant message comprises the following:

7 displaying only some of the one or more language expressions associated with the
8 first instant message.
9

10 16. The method as recited in claim 15, further comprising:
11 scrambling the displayed language expressions associated with the first instant
12 message in order to display other language expressions that were not displayed before the
13 scrambling occurred.
14

15 17. The method as recited in claim 1, wherein receiving a user selection of one
16 or more of the language expressions displayed at the first network device comprises the
17 following:

18 receiving from a limited input device a user selection of one or more of the
19 language expressions displayed at the first network device.
20

21 18. The method as recited in claim 17, wherein receiving from a limited input
22 device a user selection of one or more of the language expressions displayed at the first
23 network device comprises the following:

1 receiving from a remote control a user selection of one or more of the language
2 expressions displayed at the first network device.

3
4 19. The method as recited in claim 17, wherein receiving from a limited input
5 device a user selection of one or more of the language expressions displayed at the first
6 network device comprises the following:

7 receiving from limited input device a user selection of one or more of the language
8 expressions displayed on a television.

9
10 20. The method as recited in claim 19, wherein receiving from limited input
11 device a user selection of one or more of the language expressions displayed on a
12 television comprises the following:

13 receiving from remote control a user selection of one or more of the language
14 expressions displayed on a television.

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16 21. The method as recited in claim 1, further comprising:

17 the first network device displaying one or more icons associated with users of other
18 network devices that are network connectable to the first network device so that each is
19 capable of engaging in an instant messaging session with the user of the first network
20 device; and

21 receiving a user selection of one of the displayed icons, the selection of the
22 displayed icon enabling an instant messaging session to the user of the network device
23 associated with the selected icon.

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1 22. The method as recited in claim 21, further comprising:
2 displaying previous instant messages received from the user of the network device
3 associated with selected icon.

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5 23. The method as recited in claim 21, further comprising;
6 changing the appearance of one or more icons when a specific character sequence
7 not typically occurring in written language is received by the first network device.
8

1 24. A computer program product for implementing, in a first network device
2 associated with a network system including at least two network devices that are network
3 connectable so as to be capable of engaging in an instant messaging session, a method for
4 users of the at least two network devices to communicate via instant messaging, the
5 method reducing the amount of input required by the users, the computer product
6 comprising:

7 a computer-readable medium carrying computer-readable instructions, that
8 when executed at the first network device, cause the first network device to perform
9 the following:

10 receiving a first instant message;

11 automatically, and without user intervention, extracting one or more
12 language expressions associated with the first instant message;

13 displaying one or more language expressions associated with the
14 first instant message; and

15 receiving a user selection of one or more of the displayed language
16 expressions

17 including the selected language expressions are to be included in a
18 reply instant message to the first instant message.

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20 25. The computer program product as recited in claim 24, wherein the
21 computer-readable medium is one or more physical storage media.
22

1 26. In a network system including at least two network devices network
2 connectable so as to be capable of performing electronic mail operations, one of the at least
3 two network devices being a television, a method for users of the at least two network
4 devices to communicate via electronic mail, the method reducing the amount of input
5 required by the users, the method comprising:

6 a first network device receiving a first electronic mail message;
7 automatically, and without user intervention, extracting one or more language
8 expressions associated with the first electronic mail message;
9 displaying one or more language expressions associated with the first electronic
10 mail message at the first network device;
11 receiving a user selection of one or more of the language expressions displayed at
12 the first network device; and
13 including the selected language expressions in a reply electronic mail message to
14 the first electronic mail message.

15
16 27. The method as recited in claim 26, wherein receiving a first electronic mail
17 message on a first network device comprises the following:

18 a television set top box receiving a first electronic mail message.
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20 28. The method as recited in claim 26, wherein displaying one or more
21 language expressions associated with the first electronic mail message at the first network
22 device comprises the following:

23 displaying one or more language expressions associated with the first electronic
24 mail message on a video display associated with a television.

29. The method as recited in claim 26, wherein receiving a user selection of one or more of the language expressions displayed at the first network device comprises the following:

receiving a user selection of one or more language expressions displayed on a video display associated with a television.

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1 30. In a network system including one or more network devices, the network
2 devices being network connectable so as to be capable of engaging in an instant messaging
3 session, a method for a first user of a first network device associated with a television to
4 determine the capability of a second user to engage in an instant messaging session, the
5 method reducing the amount of input required by users, the method comprising:

6 displaying an initial status icon to the first user of the first network device so as to
7 represent the second user's capability to engage in an instant messaging session;

8 associating a specific character sequence with a changed status icon;

9 the first network device receiving the specific character sequence associated with
10 the changed status icon; and

11 displaying the changed status icon to the first user of the first network device so as
12 to represent a change in the second user's capability to engage in an instant messaging
13 session.

14
15 31. The method as recited in claim 30, wherein the first network device
16 receiving the specific character sequence associated with the changed status icon
17 comprises the following:

18 the first network device receiving an instant message that includes the specific
19 character sequence associated with the changed status icon.

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21 32. The method in claim 30, wherein associating a specific character sequence
22 with a changed status icon comprises the following:

23 associating a specific character sequence with a changed status icon that represents
24 the state of the second user.

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2 33. The method in claim 32, wherein associating a specific character sequence
3 with a changed status icon that represents the state of the second user comprises the
4 following:

5 associating a specific character sequence with a changed status icon that represents
6 the second user is offline.

7
8 34. The method in claim 32, wherein associating a specific character sequence
9 with a changed status icon that represents the state of the second user comprises the
10 following:

11 associating a specific character sequence with a changed status icon that represents
12 the second user is online and ready to engage in an instant messaging session.

13
14 35. The method in claim 32, wherein associating a specific character sequence
15 with a changed status icon that represents the state of the second user comprises the
16 following:

17 associating a specific character sequence with a changed status icon that represents
18 the second user is online but cannot engage in an instant messaging system.

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20 36. The method as recited in claim 30, wherein the first network device is a
21 television set top box associated with a cable television network.

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23 37. The method as recited in claim 36, wherein the initial status icon and the
24 changed status icon are displayed on a television associated with the television set top box.

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38. The method as recited in claim 30, wherein associating a specific character sequence with a changed status icon comprises the following:

associating a specific character sequence not normally occurring in written language with a changed status icon.

39. The method as recited in claim 38, wherein associating a specific character sequence not normally occurring in written language with a changed status icon comprises the following:

associating a specific character sequence not normally occurring in written language with a changed status icon that represents the state of the second user.